

Boat People SOS

- Year founded: 1980
- Mission: to assist Vietnamese refugees and immigrants in their search for a life in liberty and dignity.
- Office: 15 branch offices. HQ in Falls Church, VA
- Staff: 76 full-time staff and 12 Americorps/VISTA members

BP SOS's S&H Program

- **Community Awareness Campaign on Occupational Safety (CACOS) funded by OSHA:**
educates and trains Vietnamese both employers and employees about Occupational Safety and Health issues, since 2001.
- **Katrina Worker Education and Training in collaboration with OAI, inc., funded by NIEHS:**
recruits and trains Southeast Asian workers in hurricane hazards and mold awareness in Gulf Coast communities, since Nov. '05.
- **Katrina MWT Supplement in collaboration with OAI, inc., funded by NIEHS:** provides outreach, recruit and transitional assistance to Vietnamese evacuees in Texas.

Some Figures From National Council of Asian Pacific Americans

- **Louisiana: over 50,000 Asian Americans**
 - more than half were Vietnamese;
 - most lived in Katrina/Rita affected areas;
 - estimated 10,000 Vietnamese evacuees relocated to Houston and to other states.
- **Southern Mississippi: about 7,000 Vietnamese and other Asian residents, many of them now displaced.**

Vietnamese Evacuees Seeking Help at Hong Kong Shopping Center



What did we do after Katrina?

- Worked with Vietnamese Temples, Churches and other local agencies to provide emergency aids such as food, housing, etc.
- Recruited 10 volunteer staff to work in Houston office.
- Set up a temporary office in Bayou with 3 volunteers.
- Partnered with OAI to conduct a series of hurricane hazard training to Southeast Asian evacuees in Bayou, Biloxi and New Orleans.

Emergency Aids From BPSOS



BPSOS– Houston Office



Bayou La Batre, AL



Many Vietnamese non-profits & volunteers across
the country come to help

Challenges of Vietnamese Population In General

■ English Difficulties

A survey in 2001 shows that 56% of Vietnamese parents over 45 spoke little or no English. 54% of these parents needed interpreters when going to doctors and social services.

■ Limited Infrastructure and Resources

No Vietnamese-speaking staff in most of the agencies in LA, MS and AL. A few Vietnamese staff in FEMA. Reliance on faith-based and community organizations to provide assistance.

■ Cultural Differences

Most evacuees prefer coming to Vietnamese community center because they're comfortable to address their health problems.

Lessons Learned In General

1. Lack of Capacity

- No infrastructure for Vietnamese community exists in Gulf Coast areas with enough resources.
- Staff & community members were NOT trained to handle evacuation process.
- No safety & health trainings have been provided to staff.
- No mass media such as radio in LA, MS or AL. (BPSOS starts providing radio programs to Vietnamese families.)

2. No Linkage System

No linkage system between Vietnamese communities and mainstream agencies.

3. No Supportive Transitional Services

Example: transportation, childcare, housing, job placement, for returned evacuees.

Lessons learned regarding S&H

PROBLEMS:

- Lack of Resources: No PPE, no Vietnamese materials, no Vietnamese-speaking staff.
- Lack of appropriate materials and training.
- Meeting basic needs has priority over safety & health.

SOLUTIONS:

- Target hard-to-reach workers.
- Provide PPE to those in need.
- Develop culturally and language appropriate training materials
- Provide training at accessible locations—e.g., BPSOS office, temples, churches, grocery stores, relief centers and on radio.
- Incorporate S&H trainings into other programs/services.